



National Estuary Program Coastal Watersheds Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated October 9, 2020

1) Is a project in my waterbody/region eligible?

EPA established the geographic areas that delineate eligible areas, which can be viewed on an interactive map available [here](#). Please use the zoom function on the map to access the fine details of where projects may be funded. All projects must occur in their entirety within the delineated areas. Efforts adjacent to, upstream of, or as a tributary to waterbodies in the polygons will not be funded. Projects occurring outside of these areas will not be considered, nor will the geographic boundaries change.

2) How were the geographic eligibility areas determined?

In general terms, the geographic polygons established by EPA represent the existing National Estuary Program (NEP) sites along with some additional upstream and/or downstream areas. More specifically, the eligible areas represent Hydrologic Unit Codes (HUC) 12s from the Watershed Boundary Dataset (WBD) that are either partially or entirely within an NEP study area and drain into an NEP estuary, or to the coast adjacent to the NEP study area. To create the eligibility boundary polygons, EPA identified USGS' National Hydrography Data-plus flowlines that terminated within NEP study area boundaries and traced them upstream using attributes included in the data. EPA selected the WBD HUC12s containing these flowlines, limiting them to include only those HUC12s that were entirely or partially within an NEP study area. We also included inland and ocean-draining HUC12s that intersected NEP boundaries. In some instances, this step resulted in polygons that extend alongshore beyond the NEP study area boundary. Please note that HUCs may occur offshore, although most maps only show the land-based HUCs.

3) How can I get a NEP site established in my region or waterbody?

Estuaries of national significance were initially identified by Congress in § 320 of the 1987 Clean Water Act amendment (33 USC § 1330), or have since been selected for inclusion in the National Estuary Program (NEP) through a nomination process. The governor of any state may nominate to the EPA administrator an estuary lying in whole or in part within the state as an estuary of national significance and request a management conference to develop a comprehensive management plan for the estuary. The last call for nominations took place in 1994 when EPA's Congressional appropriation provided funding to support the addition of NEPs. EPA has not expanded the NEP since then, and is not yet considering expanding the number of NEPs at this time.

4) Is my organization eligible to be an applicant?

Eligible organizations include state, interstate, tribal, inter-tribal consortia and regional water pollution control agencies and entities, state coastal zone management agencies, and other public or nonprofit private agencies, institutions, and organizations. Eligible public agencies include county and local governments. Academic institutions are eligible, as well, as are NEPs. Non-profit organizations must be able to demonstrate their non-profit status.

Federal agencies, for-profit corporations, and private individuals are not eligible grantees, but may be included as partners in proposals submitted by eligible recipients. Public-private partnerships are encouraged, consistent with the competitive procurement requirements. For-profit partners, including consultants, who will receive grant funding must be selected in compliance with the competitive procurement requirements.

Recipients and team members may be based in Canada so long as the work is being performed within the geographic eligibility areas.

5) Organizations are limited to three proposals. How is that determined?

Organizations are considered to be on a team if they are included in the budget, whether they are slated to receive funding or are providing match. Any participation in a team counts toward the three-proposal limit. The proposal limit is based on an organizational, not personal or individual, basis. The limit applies to both LOIs and full proposals.

National organizations with chapters are limited to three proposals in their area of jurisdiction. For example, if XYZ national organization has a chapter in Florida, then XYZ-FL may be on a total of three proposals that occur in Florida.

Universities are limited to three proposals each by state, regardless of the number of campuses. For example, if University ABC has five campuses, the University system as a whole is limited to three submittals total, not fifteen (five campuses at three submittal each).

6) What is an existing State or locally approved community-based watershed management plan?

It is a completed plan available to the public that: 1) contains actions that address urgent and challenging issues that threaten the ecological and economic well-being of coastal and estuarine areas as identified in this subaward, 2) demonstrates State and/or local buy-in and commitment to implement actions by the appropriate parties; and 3) applies to the defined eligible areas.

7) How much money will be distributed? How many subaward cycles will occur?

Approximately \$1.5 million will be awarded for this RFP round. We anticipate a total of at least three subaward cycles, approximately annually.

8) What types of funds and efforts can be used as match? What if I will not know the status of my match until after the LOI deadline?

Funds from the RESTORE Act, Natural Resources Damages Assessment (NRDA), and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) may not be used to meet the non-federal match requirement, except in the case of Gulf Environmental Benefit Funds or other NFWF resources that are not derived from Federal financial assistance agreements. If you have questions regarding the origin of NFWF funds, you will need to ask NFWF and request clarification as to whether funds they receive are derived from a Federal grant. In addition, the inquiry should include whether NFWF receives the funds directly from a Federal agency or has pledged the funds towards cost share on a grant NFWF has received.

Non-federal salary and related fringe may be used as match. Please contact Suzanne Simon at ssimon@estuaries.org if you would like additional feedback regarding specific sources of match.

Budget figures, including match, may be preliminary for the LOI and are expected to be as well-established as possible at the time of submittal. If the status of match source will not be known until after the LOI deadline, provide the best figures available, along with an explanation. For example, match may be anticipated to be provided by a municipal budget or other grant funding, but the final decision(s) will not be made until October. In this case, submit the LOI with the match shown in the budget and include details regarding the source and timing of match.

9) How do I know which NEP is closest to me? Whom should I contact to get the letter of acknowledgement?

To determine the closest NEP, use the [NEP interactive map](#) and zoom function. Once you have determined which NEP site is closest, download the file entitled “NEP Contacts” available at the [NEP website](#) to get the name and email of the appropriate site director.

The letter does not need to endorse the project, nor would the letter be seen as support of the application (e.g., general backing and/or commitment of resources such as staff time or match). Rather, the intent is to ensure that the local or closest NEP is aware of the project proposal with the goal of increasing transparency and partnering opportunities to address the urgent and challenges issues identified in the RAE subaward.

10) What is the timeline for review and potential contracting if my project is selected for funding?

The review and award process is currently planned as follows:

- August 7, 2020: LOIs due
- September 8, 2020: Notify LOI applicants regarding status (i.e. if they have been invited to submit a full proposal or not)
- November 6, 2020: Full proposals due if invited to do so
- December 7, 2020: Notify applicants of awards

The goal is to have all contracting completed by the end of January 2020.

11) Are planning studies eligible for funding?

Planning activities and projects are eligible so long as the applicant demonstrates a clear connection between the proposed efforts and improved coastal and estuarine conditions.

12) The RFP states that “standalone” outreach is not eligible. What kind of outreach activities are eligible?

Education and outreach may be eligible as part of a larger on-the-ground implementation project. For example, efforts to educate resource managers or members of the public in order to facilitate or better implement the overall project or program would be eligible. In contrast, creating an outreach program about topic XYZ in and of itself would not be eligible. The key difference is that the outreach and education in the former example is part of the larger effort, as opposed to being the sole deliverable in the latter.

13) What types of research/monitoring/assessment efforts are eligible?

Research activities are not eligible for funding. However, assessment and/or non-routine monitoring efforts are eligible, so long as they directly address one or more of the RFP priorities (nutrients, loss of habitat, flooding and coastal erosion) *and* result in or inform actionable, on-the-ground activities that result in improvements in coastal and estuarine conditions and functions. Assessment or non-routine monitoring that do not have direct, demonstrable linkages to improved coastal and estuarine conditions are not eligible.

14) Is tuition an eligible expense?

No. Funds may not be used toward tuition, nor can tuition or tuition-related expenses provided in kind be used to satisfy the non-federal match requirement.